

The Future Carrier Fleet

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As this article goes to print, *Independence* (CV 62), the last in a proud line of *Forrestal*-class carriers, has just been decommissioned. In her nearly 40 years of service, *Indy* served our nation well, as did her sister ships *Forrestal* (CV 59), *Saratoga* (CV 3) and *Ranger* (CV 4). As we close this important chapter in Naval Aviation history, I would like to take a few minutes to consider the future of our carrier fleet.

Indy's replacement, *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75), is the eighth *Nimitz*-class carrier to enter the fleet. The *Nimitz* class has now been in service for over 23 years, and *Nimitz* (CVN 68) has just begun mid-life refueling and modernization. Although each new *Nimitz*-class carrier has incorporated modifications, the class has remained essentially the same since CVN 68 was commissioned in 1975. That is about to change.



John C. Stennis (CVN 74), with Carrier Air Wing 7 embarked, heads to the Arabian Gulf on her first operational deployment. Photo © Antony Platt/Blue Thunder Pictures